

The Source

February 2022

St John the Baptist Community Church



Thank you for the generous donations that allow us to have Kingdom impact on our community in so many ways!

*Banking Details: FNB Modimolle, Branch no 260247,
Account no 531 746 01684*

Website: 24riverschurch.com
Email Address: 24riverschurch@gmail.com



Chairman of Council – Shane Dowinton 073 430 2827
Church Secretary – Laura Dowinton 083 419 1929

“Building of the Church”

Photographs by Juliet Calcott

Editor:

Tilene Viljoen | 079 524 1148 | tilene@obiter.co.za

Design and layout: Sarah Leigh Aub, DocuSynthesis, sarah@docusynthesis.co.za



St John's

Chairman's Report

by
Shane Dowinton

The building of our new worship centre at 24 Rivers has been an interesting project for me to be involved in. Apart from labouring on the build of our own house, I have always steered clear of building projects, happy to observe progress from afar. In this case I have felt different because I feel a close connection to the church, after all it has been our worship home for 28 years. It has raised feelings in me that I didn't know I had.

I have always known that "The Church" is about people in community in the name of Christ, I have said often that church is not about buildings, structures or even organisations, to me it is "Family" and so all about relationship, with God and with each other. Yet, as I just said, I enjoyed building our family home, it was a joy to build, and it has served us well for 22 years now. It is filled with the accumulation of all those years of memories as a family. So, I have come to see this project a little like that, the building of a family home. I want it to be safe, strong, and beautiful, but I also want it to have peace, joy and hope as its pervading atmosphere, and I want it to be a place where all who visit encounter the love of the Father in Christ Jesus.



It has been a wonderful journey so far with many here being involved. There have been discussions on what it must look like, how it will function, what stones to use, what shape the windows will be, and so on. And I believe that there is still much for us all to be involved with. At times during the last year there has been prayer for what is coming, there have been prophetic words, scripture, and songs. In fact, as the foundations were being poured we placed those words, verses and inspiration into the concrete. Our church will be founded on the Word of God!

There is also a sense of legacy. I was chatting to Juliet about this because her family have been at 24 Rivers since the little church was built in 1914. I am aware that we are living on the blessing of their prayers for the future, we are the fruit of that prayer. And in the same way we are praying and building something for a generation we won't meet, our great, great grandkids. And like the pioneers that built the small church here, it will be more than we can ask or imagine because we are praying from heaven's perspective.



"bring wood and rebuild the temple"

Haggai 1:8



Here's a thought: What if when we get to be with Jesus one day, He pulls out a DVD marked with a Koki pen saying St John the Baptist Church 24 Rivers, Waterberg, South Africa, and we get to watch how the church progressed from generation to generation until Jesus returned. There might be a whole chapter on the men of this community going off to the wars, there will obviously be a chapter on the great plague of 2020/21, and the fire that burned down our church. But I'm sure that interlaced with our history will be the movement of God's Kingdom, how men and women came to Christ here and the influence of this church beyond its walls. It's spiritual history if you like. And I'm sure that if you could hear the prayers of our grandparents their realisation would be wholly greater than they or we could imagine. Why? Because scripture tells us that that is how God works!

So, if God does more than we ask or imagine when we pray (Ephesians 3:20), then what are we imagining for the future of this church. I'm seeing a place where people consistently encounter Jesus, rivers of living water flowing from every service, people coming from all points on the globe to be touched and filled by the Holy Spirit, signs wonders and miracles, people getting out of wheelchairs, healed from cancer, diabetes, auto-immune diseases, heart disease; history tracing social reform back to believers who worshipped here.

What are you imagining for the future?



The guys were installing the main wooden church doors but had found a problem. Being arched they could not open with conventional hinges. Unfortunately, they hadn't brought hinges that would allow the door to turn around the frame and they couldn't go back and collect them. It was the last day of work before Christmas and the next available date would be in the next year! Summe asked if I would come through and help solve the problem. Whilst I was on my way, Summe was sharing scriptures with the guys. To support them he went in search of a Bible. He entered the tearoom and in the top cabinet was a small cardboard box. Summe thought that it might have small Gideon Bibles inside. He put his hand in and found a number of parliament hinges, the exact ones needed to install the two large arch doors!

When I arrived, I asked to see the box and I saw there was a date stamp on the box, 31st January 2000, the exact time that they would have been installing doors on the original building. These hinges were left over from that build. How awesome that the Lord would have conveniently put aside the excess for this exact moment so that we would install these doors without delay!



Summe, Shabe & Briah



Scriptures laid in the foundation

Below are some of the scriptures that were embedded into the foundation of the new church building.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock."

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you; in His love He will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17

A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Isaiah 40:3-5



Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God, the
Creator of the ends of the earth. He
will not grow tired or weary, and His
understanding no one can fathom.
He gives strength to the weary and
increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary, and
young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength. They will
soar on wings like eagles; they will
run and not grow weary, they will
walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:28-31

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called
children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us
is that it did not know him.

1 John 3:1

These blessings will come on you
and accompany you if you obey the
Lord your God:

You will be blessed in the city and
blessed in the country. The fruit of
your womb will be blessed, and the
crops of your land and the young of
your livestock - the calves of your
herds and the lambs of your flocks.
Your basket and your kneading
trough will be blessed. You will
be blessed when you come in and
blessed when you go out. The Lord
will grant that the enemies who
rise up against you will be defeated
before you. They will come at you
from one direction but flee from
you in seven. The Lord will send
a blessing on your barns and on
everything you put your hand to. The
Lord your God will bless you in the
land He is giving you.

Deuteronomy 28:2-8

Isaiah 61:1-3

The Year of the Lord's Favour.

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendour.

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

John 14:12-14

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-25



There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each one, just as He determines.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11



Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises.

Psalms 22:3

... but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Exodus 20:6



remembering
Marilyn Jean Cook

18 November 1936 - 5 November 2021

Beloved Vaalwater missionary, Marilyn Cook, passed away on 5 November 2021 at the age of eighty-four. On 20 November 2021, the congregation of St John's 24 Rivers gathered in the Farmer's Hall together with folks from the community of Vaalwater and some from as far as the USA, to praise God for her life dedicated to His Kingdom and serving others.

In Vaalwater, Marilyn will be remembered as the 'gogo' who was never afraid to visit the township and who always had a smile, hugs, and love for the children. She devoted her life to spreading the Gospel and helping the poor and needy. Up until her last year, she ran Lethabo Kids Club in Leseding, serving up to 800 children a weekly meal, together with a Bible lesson. She also established a Saturday Bible study for the youth and founded the Kholofelo Association, which raised funds to help promising students enrol for tertiary education.

Marilyn was born in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, USA on 18 November 1936. She was the daughter of Arthur, a piano technician, and Marybeth, a registered nurse. Marilyn attended Scottsbluff High School and played the flute in the school band.





In 1955, Marilyn married Stuart Dale Cook of Wheatland, Wyoming, who was a student at Platte Valley Bible College in Scottsbluff. Stuart was an ordained minister and served in the Lyman Christian Church from the age of 18. When they were married, Marilyn joined him in building the church community.

In 1957, Stu and Marilyn moved to Casper, Wyoming, and started Richard Street Christian Church from their home. This church was the first non-denominational church in Casper, and several other congregations grew from that seed.



After hearing a preacher at a church camp, Stu and Marilyn were both separately convinced that the Lord wanted them to move to South Africa. In May 1966 they boarded an old freighter with their two little girls and their trusty red Comet, setting sail on a 24-day journey for Cape Town and ultimately Johannesburg.



In '66, Blairgowrie, Randburg, was a new suburb. The streets were not yet paved. Stu and Marilyn purchased a house here and once again began a church in their home and started training leaders. When they returned to the US for Stu to complete his master's degree, the church, now in a building, was left in the hands of the local leaders.

On returning to South Africa, Stu and Marilyn again started meeting in their home in the suburb of Florida. An opportunity arose for a property in Crown Mines, so they moved and started Alétheia Christian Education Centre - a teaching ministry where people could study by means of cassette tapes while they continued working. An early forerunner of an online Bible college.

The Lord, however, often has a way of changing plans and during this time the ministry became weighted towards counselling. The counselling continued in earnest with the move to a 55-roomed building in inner-city Berea, just off the edge of the ill-famed Hillbrow.



Most South Africans know about Hillbrow... Riddled with crime and gang activities, it was probably one of the most hectic place to be living in all South Africa in the 1970s.

Alétheia became known as a welfare organisation which cared for large numbers of destitute and desperate people. Crime, prostitution, alcoholism, drug dependency, destitution and general corruption abounded.

Stuart gives an account of this time in his book 'For Crying out Loud': 'What's on the agenda today. Last night a wife battered by an alcoholic husband arrived looking for shelter and was taken to the home of our daughter and son-in-law since all the eighty beds at Alétheia were full.' And a few pages later: 'Before today ends there will surely be at least one crisis counselling case, the continuation of Alétheia's chronic financial crises, some drunks, druggies or hoboos to deal with, some personality clashes to untangle, and hopefully a suitable opportunity to speak to one or two newer residents about their relationship with Jesus Christ.'

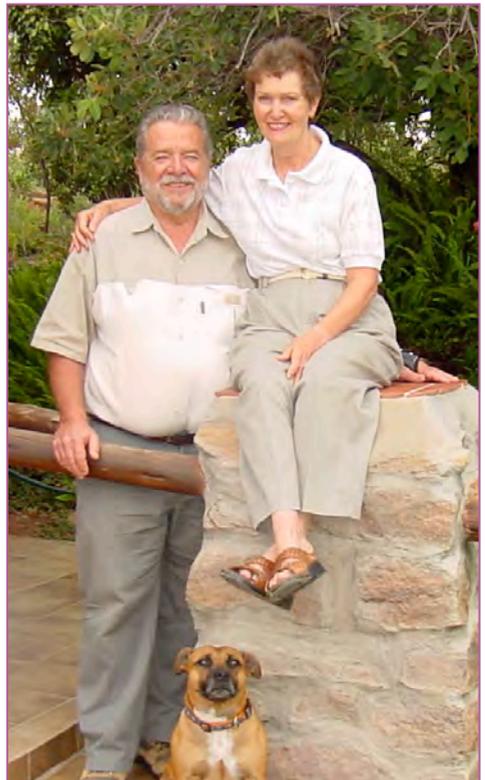
This was a thinking ministry to non-thinking people, ministering to troubled people in the big city – the casualties of society, the cop-outs and cast-outs. The goal was to get people to think straighter, live higher and be more like Jesus Christ.

During this time Stuart also mentored several young men – the “Timothys” –, authored a couple of books and obtained his doctorate. The ministry had many faces from church planting to education, counselling, rehabilitation, lecturing and writing. Marilyn adapted to each change with remarkable ease and eagerness.

While Stu had a great intellect, Marilyn housed an emotional intelligence that was able to make people feel comfortable. She could make a home anywhere – whether in the middle of the bush or in the inner city. Home life and ministry was inseparable for the Cooks. There were always visitors, from state presidents to down-and-out alcoholics, and Marilyn took this in her stride and showed the same grace to all. Their ministries and life work centred around the home and Marilyn was the mistress of hospitality.

In 2001 they moved from the intense inner-city ministry in Johannesburg to Vaalwater, Limpopo where Stuart could concentrate on writing. They made St John’s their church family and Marilyn started working in Leseding where 600-800 children would come to Lethabo Kids Club, have some fresh farm milk, peanut butter-and-jam sandwiches, and a lesson on how much Jesus loved them.

A car accident in 2010 took Stu’s life. Marilyn was badly injured with 11 broken ribs, a punctured lung, and a fractured neck as well as multiple lacerations. Marilyn, who had spent her life energies as the support of this man of God was now on her own. It was expected that she would retire, but after she recovered, she chose to continue to live and work in Limpopo to be with her ‘other children’.





While the Bible says not to worry about what you will eat or drink or wear, Marilyn did worry about these things, but never for herself. As Francis of Assisi took Poverty for his Bride, she clung to those in poverty, hurting for those in dire need, looking for ways to help them, and always praying for them.

When Marilyn's eyes failed, her staff rallied, helped her to know what groceries she was picking and to recognise the people whose faces she could no longer see. In her last days, her daughters and Hellen Sibande rarely left her side. On November 20th, 2021, Marilyn was buried in the century-old churchyard in 24 Rivers, next to Stuart. We have no doubt that she is one of the Godly ones whose death was as precious as her life. Whenever we think of her, we say, blessed be the Lord our God, blessed be the Lord our God. May His light shine through her now and forever, Amen.

Marilyn founded The Source and was the editor for many years until she could no longer see well enough to continue. We miss her but are inspired to follow her direction in furthering God's Kingdom.



living stones

What will it take
to be a church that
hosts the Lord?

by
Shane Dowinton



1 Peter 2:4-10

“As you come to him, the living Stone - rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says:

“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message - which is also what they were destined for.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Reading 1 Peter 2:4-10, I felt the Lord was reminding me of *what makes the heart of the church beat*. This is a letter from the Apostle Peter and in this small passage he coins quite a few phrases about the church which merit our attention as they give us insight to the nature and function of the church.



1. *The stone which the builders rejected*

As you walk towards our new worship building you will be faced with stone walls. Stone is a great metaphor for strength and power and scripture loves to show us that. The Old Testament often describes Israel in terms of a stone that has been pushed aside as useless (just read the news daily) but God gave Israel the most honourable and important position in the building of His kingdom. It is Israel, her culture, her customs, her genealogy, that birthed the saviour of the world. But Jesus takes that picture and applies it to Himself. It is not just Israel that is the stone the builders rejected, Jesus refers to Himself as the fulfilment of the prophecy in Psalms 118:22.

“The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

Psalms 118:22

When Jesus hung on the cross it may have looked to the world as if he was utterly rejected by men; but in the purpose of God, Jesus is the capstone of the very edifice of the Kingdom, honoured and worshipped by all.

Peter also describes Jesus as a stone of offence, a stumbling block (Isaiah 8:13-14).

“The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread. He will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that causes people to fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.”

Isaiah 8:13-14

Jesus stands in the midst of history, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. There is no other way to the Father. It was an offence to the Jews and it remains an offence to the world. The world would love a self-designed religion that gets us to heaven, but I think when we truly examine ourselves, we know deep down we don't have what it takes to meet God. We need a mediator, we need a saviour. Jesus is that to us, there is no other way. But so often, that thought is an offence that bars the way to salvation.

The capstone of the church is Jesus. There is no other way into the most holy place of God's presence, without Him. It is the capstone of our faith. At once it is the most inclusive and exclusive provision for reconciliation.

And Peter also calls us, the followers of Christ, living stones. Wrapped around this capstone is a building of stones. Jesus Himself told Peter He would build His church upon this rock. It is on the faith of Jesus' loyal followers that the church is built.



This picture of us as living stones reveals something of the nature of church. As a building is not made of a solitary stone but a carefully assembled assortment, so the church is a community. *There is no such thing as a freelance Christian. We cannot live apart from each other, a solitary Christian is a contradiction in terms. We are only significant as far as we are incorporated into the body of believers.* When we go it alone we fail. In describing how we wanted the rock walls to look in the new church we said we wanted the rocks as close to each other as possible. Believers must stand shoulder to shoulder in the church of Christ. Because stones are not uniform in shape, they are hand-picked, "chosen" to fit into the shapes of others. That fit makes them significant and precious.



Have you ever seen your position in this church in those terms? That you are not here by chance, that you didn't just happen into this community of people? God chose you and says that you are precious to him. You have a truly significant place and role within the fellowship of believers.

Peter continues this idea by saying we are a chosen generation. The word he uses is *eklektos*, from where we get the word *eclectic*. It means to gather or pick out and suggests that God chose us out of the world to carry special privileges or to do particular services for Him.

The church has become the new Israel.





3. A Royal Priesthood

We are a 'Royal Priesthood'. What does that mean? The Latin word for priest is 'Pontifex' which means bridge builder. A priest in the kingdom of God is one who builds a bridge for others to come to God. In the Old Covenant only a priest could enter the holy of holies and even then only by making a blood sacrifice. Through Christ access to God has been granted us by His sacrifice made once and for all. We are made holy by Christ and we are a church of priests in a royal kingdom.

Priests were also to make offerings to God. Under the New Covenant we are to bring spiritual offerings to Him. Everything becomes sacred, our work, our families, our relationships. We make ourselves an offering. (Romans 12:1)

"Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship."

Romans 12:1

God doesn't ask for duty or ceremony, He desires the love of our hearts and the service of our lives.

As priests we are also to proclaim the praises of God. In other words, we are to witness to men the mighty acts of God. Our lives, our words, our actions are to be a witness to the transforming power of Christ in us. We have made this an important part of our culture in this family of God. We love to share testimonies to His glory and power.

4. A Holy Nation

The church is a Holy nation. The meaning of holy is to be set apart, we are to be different from the world. The church is to be dedicated to God's will and to His service, that will make us very different to what the world calls good.

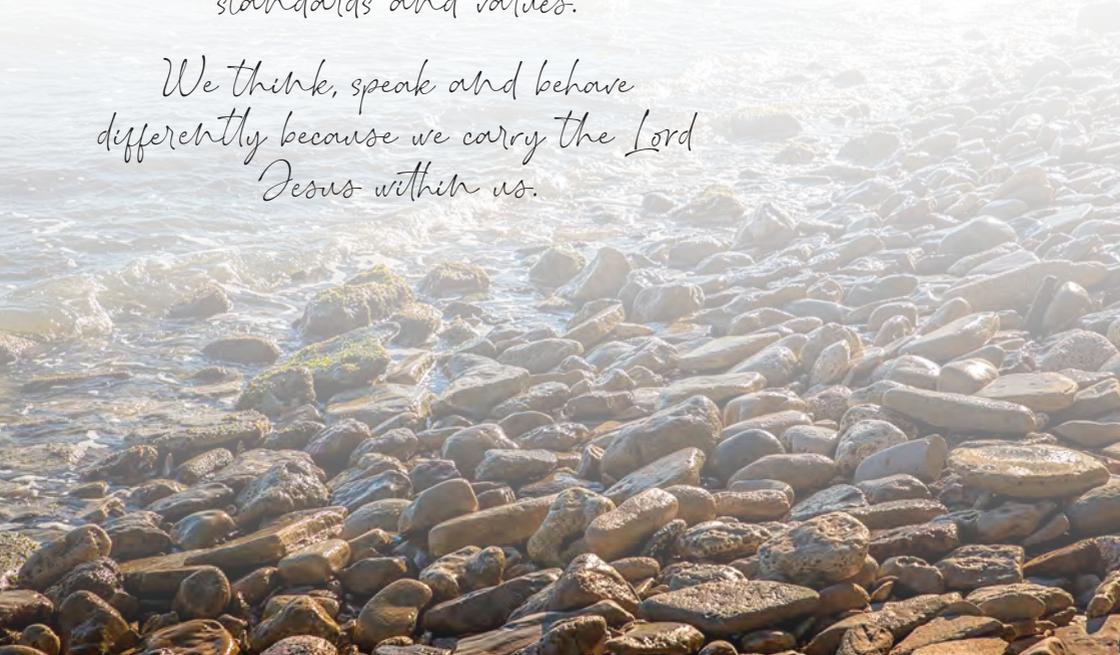
God's standards and values are holy, different, and we must be aware that the Christian life will make us stand out from other people, after all we have been called out of darkness into His marvellous light.

It doesn't take a lot of investigation to see the darkness the world lives in, in fact it's hard not to be overwhelmed by how broken the world is. But the truth is that when we chose to follow Christ we were delivered from the kingdom of darkness and brought into an entirely new, bright and vibrant Kingdom.

Our perspective has changed, or should have. Once upon a time we lacked purpose, connection and meaning, we were dead in our sin. But now we have received mercy, we belong to God, we are significant and have purpose, we can call ourselves children of God. And we have been set apart as a people of light.

*We represent a different set of
standards and values.*

*We think, speak and behave
differently because we carry the Lord
Jesus within us.*





Acts of Mercy

blessed is the hand that gives

Acts of Mercy continued its work despite the alarming rise of Covid 19 cases over the last months. Despite this and other challenges such as impassable roads caused by rain, Grace Ismail managed to reach out to those with essential needs handing out food parcels, essential items, clothes, and bedding.

"Some of the challenges I encountered were family neglect of their loved ones which included the elderly and those with chronic illness. Alcoholism is also on the rise, which resulted in gender-based violence and physical injuries," says Grace.

"My future plans are to continue with Acts of Mercy activities and to include the local councillors from different wards to be part of daily tasks and involvement in the community. I appreciate fellow Christians who donated various items which benefited those in need. Because of the ongoing donations my work became easier."

If you want to support this initiative, you can either donate financially into the St John's church bank account below, making the reference 'Acts of Mercy', or you can make donations in kind and contact Grace on 072 828 3788 to arrange drop-off in Vaalwater.

Banking Details: FNB Modimolle, Branch no 260247, Account no 531 746 01684





Lethabo Kids Club founder, Marilyn Cook, went to be with the Lord on 5 Nov last year. The ministry will continue as part of Mission2SA led by Connie Wicks, Marilyn's eldest daughter and her son Morné Wicks who, for the past three years, have been heavily involved in the running of Mission2SA under Marilyn's guidance.

Over the years, a number of the youth who grew up under Marilyn's guidance in Kids Club, ended up devoting themselves to a life of ministry. Two of these youth were Godfrey Lebesse and Johannes Motshegoa. Godfrey has been Marilyn's 'right hand man' for many years, leading Bible studies and Kids Club every week. Godfrey also currently leads his own church in Leseding. Johannes has assisted with the Bible studies and Kids Club for a number of years as well and, between these two young men, they have faithfully and steadfastly spread the Gospel of Jesus to the kids of Leseding, and continue to do so up to this day.

Morné and Connie are in regular contact with Godfrey and Johannes, and are making regular trips to Vaalwater at this stage. Every Saturday, two Bible study groups are held, one for younger children and the other for teens/young adults. These are led either by Godfrey or Johannes. They have continued Marilyn's tradition of serving cake to the kids after Bible study. Fortunata bakes these every week and Eric delivers them.

Since the beginning of Covid and lockdowns, the Wednesday Kids' Club had to be shut down due to the number of children who usually attended. In September 2020, Marilyn and her team started up a Sunday Kids Club. This has been very successful and between 40-80 children attend each week. They are given peanut butter and jam sandwiches and cool drink after the singing and Bible story. They hope to be able to start up the Wednesday Kids' Club again now that our meeting restrictions are not as severe.

In November the team had a Christmas party for the Lethabo kids who usually attend the Saturday Bible Studies and Sunday Kids Club. This was a wonderful day and more than 130 children turned up. They sang songs, Morné and Godfrey told the Christmas story and the kids received a t-shirt with the saying **"Don't Worry, Pray! Phillipians 4:6"** as well as getting hotdogs and cool drinks. They all happily went off with a packet of chips and a goody bag.

Connie says: *"After many years of prayerfully asking for wisdom and guidance, we can today see how the Lord has paved the way for Marilyn's passionate work to continue. We have an enthusiastic and eager team, working together for the name of Jesus and the glory of God to be made known to the children of Leseding. We ask that you continue to keep the important work of the ministry, and especially Godfrey, Johannes and Eric in your prayers."*

Lethabo Kids Club continues under the leadership of the M2SA/Alétheia team: Morné, Hellen, Godfrey, Johannes, Getty and Eric (pictured below, left to right).

*Banking Details:
Aletheia International Ministries, Absa Bank, Swift code ABSAZAJJ,
Clearwater Mall Branch 632005,
Current account 2930140204*





Thanks be to God that the 2021 school year went well at The Fold and no one contracted Covid. A donor provided laptops and paid for stronger internet for the school. Waldorf Academy from Johannesburg brought 31 tenth graders to do manual labour and play with the children. The year ended on a high note with the graduation ceremony and a Christmas party before the children left for the school holiday.

A big thank you to all the donors, and to the hunters who donate meat to the school!

*To donate to The Fold in South Africa:
Nedbank, Current Account: 1445126591
Branch 144547, Lephahale | SWIFT CODE: NEDSZAJJ
Or international online at: <https://www.thefold-sa.org/>*

